



SPECIAL REVIEW

Leipoldt's Food and Wine

Jonathan Spencer Jones

Leipoldt's Food and Wine. Ed. by T S Emslie and P L Murray. Cape Town: Stonewall Books, 2003. Pp xxi + 640. ISBN 0-620-30617-3. (Available from SAMA-HMPG. Price R290.00, members R265.00.)

As a doctor and former editor of the *SAMJ*, Louis Leipoldt needs little introduction. But perhaps not so well known is Leipoldt's interest in food and wine, which he developed during his youth and took the opportunity to study during his medical student years in London, when he worked in various hotels to supplement his income.

Now the publishers that brought out Leipoldt's *The Valley* trilogy have put together another single-volume trilogy of his writings on food and wine, comprising *Leipoldt's Cape Cookery*, *Culinary Treasures* and *300 Years of Cape Wine*.

Of these three *Leipoldt's Cape Cookery* is probably the best known, having been first published posthumously as recently as 1976, almost three decades after Leipoldt's death. Wide-ranging in content, this is on the one hand a history of cookery at the Cape based on historical records and manuscripts up to Leipoldt's day — many of which he himself had collected — and on the other his own observations on foods and their preparation as well as a selection of old recipes.

Culinary Treasures is unique in that it is the first of the three works to appear in English. Published previously as *Polyfytjies vir die Proe*, it comprises a collection of 55 short articles that Leipoldt wrote under the pseudonym K A R Bonade for *Die Huisgenoot* between the years 1942 and 1947. All aspects of food are covered in these pieces, which are less than three pages in

length, and as may be expected, are light in style and easy reading.

Three Hundred Years of Cape Wine was also published posthumously, in 1952, and covers the history of wine at the Cape up to Leipoldt's time, with some additional comments on what wine is and how to taste it. Given the nature of winemaking — that it is not made in the home, and that ultimately it is a technological process — this work lacks the personal insights that characterise the other two and is also the

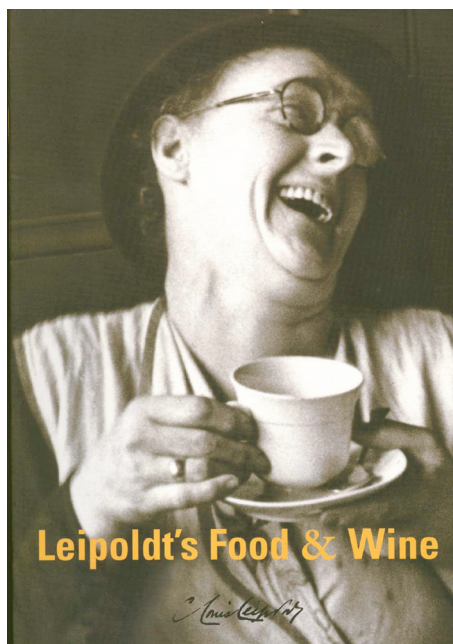
most dated, but it is of no less interest for that and the editors justify its inclusion on the grounds of presenting Leipoldt's views on the subject.

As if all that is not enough, the book also includes a foreword by Dr Peter Shields, who lived with Leipoldt from the age of 12 years and provides some reminiscences of 'Doc', and a whole collection of mainly historical photographs of Leipoldt and other scenes. The result is a weighty offering, no less than 640 pages in length, that requires a strong hand to hold!

Leipoldt's style is timeless and his writing remains as fresh and interesting as the day it was written, only the content and the occasional usage of words betraying its age. But therein is its interest, in documenting an aspect of life and traditions that in this era of fast and

prepared foods have all but disappeared. For Leipoldt food and drink were things to be savoured, without snobbishness, and his enthusiasm is reflected in these pages.

This book is a welcome addition to the Leipoldt literature in English and adds a new dimension to a clearly remarkable and interesting individual.



Jonathan Spencer Jones is a former news editor of the SAMJ and is now involved in publications on energy, mining and metering in Africa and South America.

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